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African American, Jews

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Dallas News

3/18/89



The Dallas Morning News: Cindy Yamanaka

Congressman speaks on race relations

U.S. Rep. Mickey Leland (left) tells a gathering of African-Americans and Jews on Friday that "I don't like any purveyor of hate." The Houston Democrat spoke at the Martin Luther King Jr. Library, where a touring photo exhibit, "Hand in Hand for Justice," can be seen through Monday. The exhibit promotes black-Jewish relations and recaps Jewish involvement in the civil rights movement. At right are library manager Joyce Sauls and Dr. John Herman of the Dallas Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith.

THURSDAY, MAY 16, 1985

THE CHRISTIAN SCIENCE MONITOR

p. 5

NATIONAL

Black-Jewish ties at crossroads

Evidence of cooperation mounts despite recent setbacks

By Victoria Irwin
Staff writer of The Christian Science Monitor

New York

The air conditioning gave a decidedly cool feeling to the conference room.

Perhaps, one speaker said, that was because the building management thought the dialogue was going to "get hot."

The topic at that meeting, the recent annual convention of the American Jewish Committee, was relations between blacks and Jews. Such quips have been typical as leaders strive to restrengthen ties. Although the two groups have historically been allies, there has been a testiness between them in recent years.

There have been many examples of cooperation, as when black leaders joined US Jews in Germany to oppose President Reagan's Bitburg cemetery visit.

But friendships between the two groups have sometimes been strained.

For instance, in New York last week Mayor Edward I. Koch said he was upset that there were few blacks at a rally in support of Soviet Jewry. And when mayoral candidate Herman D. Farrell Jr., a black, decided recently to ask the Rev. Jesse Jackson to campaign for him, his campaign treasurer, Leon Charney, who is Jewish, resigned.

In a New York Times/WCBS-TV poll last month 40 percent said relations be-

tween blacks and Jews in New York City were bad. But 32 percent said they were not bad.

Relations between blacks and Jews, says Henry E. Parker, Connecticut's state treasurer, are "at an important crossroads." During the last presidential campaign, there were "far too many examples of harsh and mean rhetoric," says Mr. Parker, who is black.

At issue at that time were remarks by Louis Farrakhan, leader of the Nation of Islam. He was associated with Jesse Jackson for a time during his bid for the presidential nomination. The remarks were widely seen as anti-Semitic. Many Jewish leaders felt that the Rev. Mr. Jackson should have immediately distanced himself from Mr. Farrakhan.

There was "harm done" during the Jackson candidacy, says Irving M. Levine, director of national affairs for the American Jewish Committee and head of its Institute for American Pluralism.

Blacks and Jews have had close ties since the 1940s, says Mr. Levine. It was back then that Jewish groups decided to expand their strategy of trying to change attitudes to combat anti-Semitism.

During the 1950s and '60s, blacks and Jews marched together, were arrested together, and, in the case of three young men registering voters in Mississippi in



Jewish officials Theodore Mann, Henry Siegman (l.), black activist Dick Gregory at Dachau

1964, even died together.

"No group of white allies has had more of an involvement with or stood more in the forefront of the black political-social agenda than our Jewish brothers and sisters," Parker told the recent American Jewish Committee meeting.

But the two groups came out of the civil-rights era in very different social and economic positions. Their agendas were not always the same. There were suspicions on both sides.

Jews mention the "third worldism" of black leaders and their sympathy for groups like the Palestine Liberation Organization. They express concern over the way black churches view Israel.

And there is a perception among some blacks, Parker says, that Israel should not do business with South Africa, that the country has been too harsh on the Palestinians, and that it receives too much

aid from the United States in comparison with third-world countries. At the domestic level, there has often been friction in poor areas where Jewish merchants owned stores that blacks shopped at.

Still, the need now is to continue the dialogue, Levine says. Clarence Wood, vice-president of the National Urban League, agrees. He has seen, he says, an inability on the part of the two groups to sit down and decide what to agree on instead of responding to crises.

Throughout the country there have been efforts at reconciliation. In Connecticut, Parker says, a "coalition of conscience" between Jews and blacks was formed last year in the wake of strained relations. Although the two groups have "agreed to disagree" on certain issues, they did so "in the knowledge that ... that fact does not mean that we are enemies, only that we are equals," he says.

FRI., 3/17
12N

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TOPIC: KEYNOTE ADDRESS: "HAND IN HAND FOR
JUSTICE". SPEECH SHOULD ADDRESS THE
ISSUE OF BLACK/JEWISH RELATIONS.

COMMENTS: PROGRAM WILL COMMEMORATE DR. MARTIN
LUTHER KING, JR.

SPEECH ELEMENTS PER ML: PARALLELS THROUGHOUT
HISTORY, BEGINNING WITH MOSES & SUPORA(1ST WIFE) (FIRST BLACK
JEWISH COALITION). TRACE HISTORICAL PARTNERSHIPS.

DISCUSS HIS WORK IN ETHIOPIA...GOING TO ETHIOPIA THIS MONTH.
ONE OF ITEMS ON AGENDA IS TO FACILITATE EXODUS OF ETHIOPIAN JEWS
TO ISRAEL.

VALUE OF BLACKS & JEWISH PARTNERSHIPS...PARALLEL HISTORIES, BOTH
DISCRIMINATED AGAINST.

MOSES LED JEWS OUT OF BONDAGE. ML GOING TO LEAD BLACKS.